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ALL THINGS EARTHLY, CHANGING AND TRANSITORY.

A

S E R M O N

Preached in Lenox, Mass.

APRIL 30, 1845,

AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ORDINATION TO
THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY IN SAID TOWN,

BY SAMUEL SHEPARD, D. D.

TOGETHER WITH THE ADDRESS OF THE REV. MR. TODD.

LENOX:
J. G. STANLEY.
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their Committee,

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THE public religious exercises, accompanying the delivery of the following Sermon, commenced with singing 'Denmark,' by the choir.

The invocation, reading of portions of Scripture, and a Hymn, composed by Mrs. SIGOURNEY, and set to music by Mr. Wilson,—by Rev. T. S. Clarke, of Stockbridge.

Praise to the Giver of our joys,—
Who 'mid life's changeful day,
While dearest treasures fail or fade,
And firmest props decay,
Doth gird our much-lov'd pastor's hand,
That heavenward points the way.

Praise to the Author of our trust,
Who, when affliction's darts
Make midnight in our bowers of love,
And fondest hope departs,
Still spares the voice rever'd, that speaks
Heaven's comfort to our hearts.

We thank thee, Father! who hast breath'd
Thy Spirit in his breast,
And with a crown of righteousness
His aged temples blest,—
Grant that his flock with him may share
Thine everlasting rest.

Rev. T. S. Clarke offered the first prayer.

A second Hymn, composed by Mrs. SIGOURNEY, and set to music by Mr. Wilson, was then sung.

Ye, o'er whose blooming brows
Life's freshest dews descend,—
Give honor to the hoary head,
The Patriarch, and the Friend.

He many a wandering lamb
Hath to green pastures brought,
And duly watches for your souls,
With deep and prayerful thought.

Learn from his lips the lore
That makes the simple wise;
And gather from his saintly life
Example for the skies.

Oh, bright and youthful band,
The children of our love,
Give honor to the hoary head,
And praise to God above.

There was a pause in the delivery of the Sermon, whilst a Hymn, the first line of which is 'Hark! the song of Jubilee!' was sung.

At the close of the Sermon, Rev. Mr. TODD, of Pittsfield, delivered an appropriate address to the congregation. He then offered the concluding prayer, and read a third Hymn, composed by Mrs. SIGOURNEY, which, together with the Christian Doxology, was sung by the choir—tune, 'Old Hundred'—in which the whole assembly united.

Where are the fathers? they who chose
 'Mid these fair vales their happy lot, —
 Here, where their native streamlet flows?
 We call them, but they answer not.

Where are the fathers? Tell us where?
 At wintry fireside sparkling clear, —
 At hall, and board, and house of prayer,
 We seek them, but they are not here.

Where are the fathers? Gone to rest!
 Yon hallowed church-yard, sadly fair,
 The swelling mounds on earth's green breast,
 The silent tomb-stones teach us where.

Where are the fathers? Risen to God!
 If here they labored for the skies,
 Still may we keep the path they trod,
 And join in Heaven earth's broken ties.

Benediction by Rev. Mr. Clarke.

S E R M O N .

‘THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD PASSETH AWAY.’—1 *Corinthians*, 7: 31.

EVERY thing in the universe is subject to change, except God himself. Perfect immutability can be ascribed only to him. ‘I am the Lord,’ saith he, ‘I change not.’ ‘With him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.’ ‘One day is with him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.’ ‘He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.’ All things respecting Creation, Providence, and Redemption, were eternally in his view. All, all existed in his own infinite mind. It is, therefore, only in condescension to our finite capacities and conceptions that the term fore-knowledge is used in relation to God; for, in strict propriety of speech, there is no fore-knowledge nor after-knowledge with God. All things are forever present to his mind, and with him it is one eternal *now*. This accords with the language of the poet:

‘O Thou Eternal One! whose presence bright
All space doth occupy — all motion guide;
Thou from primeval nothingness didst call
First, chaos; then existence — Lord, on thee
Eternity had its foundation.’

All things, however, pertaining to the world and time, are changing, and tending to dissolution. Nothing in relation to them is permanent — nothing necessarily immutable. They are,

from their own nature, necessarily subject to change and decay ; and, that they do not pass at once into their native nothingness, is owing to the upholding power of their immutable author. This is emphatically true in regard to all things merely of a worldly nature ; but that *unseen state*, to which we all hasten, will be eternal. The circumstances attending it will, by a divine constitution, be kept from that change and decay, to which the things of the present life and world are subject. The fashion of *that world* will not pass away. Our state will there be unalterably fixed. He that is filthy, will then be filthy still ; and he that is holy, will be holy still. Not so the things pertaining to this mortal state. They are not only mutable in their nature, and subject to change, but are actually, and constantly, and necessarily changing. They pass away, and must soon come to an end.

The general proposition which the text obviously contains may be illustrated by the following particulars :

The kingdoms of this world pass away.

Cast we an eye over the pages of history, and we soon discover a striking trait of the fashion of this world, and the transitory nature of its greatest glory. The great things of kingdoms, political revolutions, and rising states and nations, are considered by vast multitudes as the glory of the world, and that which eclipses all other glory. These, of course, attract the principal attention of historians, and multitudes read concerning them with avidity ; but how true it is, that their glory, whatever it was, is a glory departed ! Where now are the Moabites, the Canaanites, the Assyrians, and ancient Egyptians ? They can be found only on the page of history. Where now are Babylon, and Nineveh, and Tyre ? They were cities once, the wonder of the world and the marts of nations ! But they are now levelled in the dust, and inhabited by beasts of prey. Where now are the four great monarchies of the world — the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman ? They, according to predictions recorded in God's word, have all, excepting the last, passed away. The image seen by Nebuchadnezzar was of gold, of silver, of brass, and of iron and clay. Nothing remains of it but the toes, which are

of iron and clay. These, in prophecy, represent the kingdoms and states of Europe. In them the seeds of corruption, of intrigue, of irreligion, and of licentious principles and practices, are extensively sown, and are rapidly springing up. And what their *end* will be we know not, only as we are informed by the sure word of prophecy. In *that* we are assured that in their pride and vain-glory they must pass away; for this image, as seen in a dream, and interpreted by Daniel, was smitten upon his feet by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and scattered like the dust, the chaff of the summer threshing floor.

The enjoyments of the world pass away.

Upon every mere earthly enjoyment change and uncertainty are written in the most legible characters. *Riches* are uncertain as to their attainment, and uncertain in regard to their continuance. It is often the case, that men who arrive at what they imagine and call (though very improperly) an independent fortune, are but a step from poverty! Many striking evidences of this truth have recently come to our knowledge. *Riches* are, in the word of God, called *emphatically*, 'uncertain riches.' Hence the direction, 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches.' *Honors and pleasures* also, yea, every gratification arising from the world and its connections, are equally changeful and transitory. The enjoyment of them depends, among many other things, upon the blessing of health. But *that* is, in itself, extremely precarious, and is one of those things which pass away.

The times, and seasons, and different periods of human life, pass away.

How rapidly, and yet, in many respects, imperceptibly, does the stream of years roll on, bearing with it the frail bark of life! In the silent flight of time man is almost imperceptibly borne along, through the different stages and periods of life, to an unwasting eternity! As the seasons of the year, — spring, summer, autumn, and winter, — so the different seasons of human life, — childhood, youth, manhood, and age, — in quick succession protrude each other, till each has passed away.

The inhabitants of the world pass away.

Constantly are they going off the stage of life, and are seen no more. Upon some, in every period, every state, and every circumstance in life, Death lays his heavy hand. Every day and every hour witnesses the departure of many from this world of sin and sorrow. The number of inhabitants upon the earth is, as I suppose, usually estimated at about nine hundred and fifty millions. According to this computation, 'there die yearly, thirty-five millions one hundred and eighty-five thousand one hundred and eighty-five — every week, six hundred and seventy-six thousand six hundred and thirty-eight — in each day, ninety-six thousand six hundred and sixty-two — every hour, four thousand and twenty-seven — and sixty-seven every minute!!' What a stream of souls, therefore, is continually borne along 'with the tide of time, to the ocean of eternity!' Some by famine, some by pestilence, and some by the sword of their fellow men, pass away. The inhabitants of the earth are, as one observes, 'like the leaves of the trees. They come forth in the spring, and clothe the woods in robes of green. In autumn, they wither and fall. The wintry winds then scatter them on the earth. Another race comes in their season, and clothes the forest again.' Thus the fashion of this world passeth away. More than this —

The world is itself passing away.

It has once been broken up and changed by a deluge of waters. It is still composed of gross and perishable materials. These all tend to dissolution. It labors under the malediction of heaven. 'It tolls,' as saith the poet, 'the death-bell of its own decease; and, by the voice of all its elements, preaches the general doom.' According to divine testimony, it is 'reserved unto fire, and the perdition of ungodly men.' 'Lift up your eyes to the heavens,' saith the prophet, 'and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner.' 'The day of the Lord,' saith the apostle Peter, 'will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements

shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.'

That the proposition in the text may be further illustrated, it may here be proper to advert to some of the events and changes which have occurred in this church and town, more especially in the course of the last fifty years.

The first inhabitant of this town was Mr. Jonathan Hinsdale, from Hartford, (Conn.) in 1750. In 1767 the town was incorporated; and in 1769, the Congregational Church was organized by Rev. Samuel Hopkins, of Great Barrington; and has now the same confession of faith, and form of covenant, which were then adopted. The male members received into the Church, at the time of its organization, were *nine* in number; and by the names of Collins, Tracey, Stanley, Hinsdale, Steel, Bacon, Andrews, Landers, and Richards. For several years after the first settlement of the town, the number of inhabitants increased very slowly. One cause of this was fear of Indian depredations. In 1755, the inhabitants of the town were driven from their homes by the approach of savages, who were instigated to hostilities by the French, in Canada. It was not, therefore, till 1770, that the first Minister of the Gospel, Rev. Samuel Munson, was settled in the town. Mr. Munson was from New Haven, (Conn.) He was a graduate of Yale College in 1763, and was a man of good abilities, of ardent piety, sound in the faith, and zealous in promoting the cause of the Redeemer. He lived, however, 'in troublous times.' The revolutionary war occasioned very bitter animosities among the people; and, subsequently, what is called the 'Shays' insurrection' was productive of much evil in the town. Such was the state of the Church, that, for seven years, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not administered to its members. The number of inhabitants in Lenox, according to the census of the United States in 1800, was 1041. In 1820, it was about 1315, and, since that time, it has never varied much from that number. From the time of Mr. Munson's settlement, in 1770, to that of his dismissal, in 1792, was twenty-two years. During that time the Church was not greatly increased in numbers, and contained but a very few more members at the close of

his ministry than at the beginning. In October, 1794, your present Pastor came, by invitation, to preach to this people as a candidate for settlement in the work of the gospel ministry. Having received a unanimous call to become the Pastor of this Church and the minister of this people, he was, in compliance with their request, ordained according to the order of Christ's House, April 30th, 1795. The Ordaining Council consisted of the following Ministers, with delegates from their respective Churches, namely: Rev. Dr. West, Stockbridge; Rev. Ephraim Judson, Sheffield; Rev. Dr. Strong, Chatham, Conn.; Rev. Thomas Allen, Pittsfield; Rev. Daniel Collins, Lanesborough; Rev. David Perry, Richmond; Rev. Alvan Hyde, Lee; and Rev. Oliver Ayer, West Stockbridge.

Mr. Perry offered the introductory prayer. Dr. Strong preached the sermon, from 1st of Corinthians, 4th chapter, 1st and 2d verses: 'Let a man so account of us, as of the Ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.' Dr. West offered the ordaining prayer; Mr. Judson gave the charge to the Pastor; Dr. Hyde presented the right hand of fellowship; and Mr. Allen offered the concluding prayer. The first and only meeting-house that had ever been built in the town, was still occupied for religious worship by the Congregational Society, when I began my labors here, and eleven years afterwards; or, until this house was dedicated to the worship of God, which was January 1st, 1806. But the old house was so limited in its dimensions, and in such a state of decay, that it was thought inexpedient to have the ordination service performed in it. A stage was therefore erected on the south side of it, for the accommodation of the Council. Seats were also amply provided for the convenience of the great concourse who were present on that occasion.

The whole number of Congregational Ministers in the County, at the time of my ordination, was fifteen; and the number settled since that time, in different parts of the County, and at different times, is eighty-one.

I could not learn, from any of the first settlers, that there had

been any particular season of religious revival in this town until June, 1799. It appears that the greatest number ever added to this Church, in the course of one year, was eleven. *That*, if I am rightly informed, was in the year 1783. Such was the effect of the unhappy divisions which occurred in the Church, of the numerous interruptions, also, to public religious instruction, and the stated administration of divine ordinances, that, for many years, the message to the Church in Sardis might, with peculiar propriety, have been addressed to this Church. 'I know thy works; that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.' At the time of my ordination, the state of the Church was such as to call for the fervent prayers of all who had a heart to pray. The number of its members was not much greater, perhaps, than it had been for twenty years before, and almost all of them were sinking under the weight of years. No one in early life was a member of the Church. No one in youth had been received into it in the course of sixteen years. To see those who were young, all as one, wasting away their best moments in stupidity; to view them as dying and accountable creatures; and yet living, apparently, without a hope, — 'without a wish beyond the grave;' and to see only a few grey-headed people compose almost the whole number of communicants at the sacramental table, could not fail to give feelings, not easily to be described, to one just entering upon the work of the gospel ministry. Well might this Church, as did God's ancient covenant people, when they sat in captivity by the waters of Babylon, hang their harps upon the willows; for it seemed, indeed, that when the few who were rapidly passing down the vale of time, should be borne to the grave, and delivered from the evil to come, the name of Jesus, in the holy ordinance of the Supper, would, among us, be scarcely had in remembrance. But the Lord hath said, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,' and glory be to His name! With Him is the residence of the spirit; and He can shed down his influences, when and where, and on whom it may seem good in His sight. In the year 1799, he was pleased to make it a day of his power, and to manifest the glory of his grace amongst this people; and to cause in the midst of us a

shaking among the dry bones. A revival of religion became general in the town at that time ; and, in October of that year, twenty-four persons were received into the Church. That was with us a memorable day. Only a small part of the congregation had ever before seen a young person publicly engage in the Christian warfare. From the same youthful circle, from the same family, some were ' taken,' while others were ' left.' While some parents were so happy as to see their children following them in the Christian profession, others, who were still conscious of being heirs of that kingdom which is destined to destruction, saw their offspring fleeing for refuge to the wounds of a bleeding Savior. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, were separated by that line of distinction which is formed by a religious profession. In this the sovereignty of God was obvious. 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.' Having taken upon themselves the bonds of the Christian covenant, and attended to a particular address to the Church and to them, dictated by the interesting occasion, they, who then publicly united with the visible Church of Christ, sang a hymn, which concluded thus :

' Saints by the power of God are kept,
Till full salvation come :
We walk by faith, as strangers here,
Till Christ shall call us home.'

The language to the spectators, in the scene then passing before them, was, ' We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you ; come thou with us, and we will do thee good ; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.' A solemn silence was apparent during the whole service. Not an air of levity was for a moment seen on any countenance. The infidel and abandoned man stood appalled ; and to the friends of Zion, the season afforded a prelibation of heavenly joys. The old and the young, who were present, seemed ready to adopt the language of Jacob, when, at Bethel, he awoke from a dream : ' How dreadful is this place ! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.' About sixty persons, as the fruits of that revival, were added to the Church. In 1807

there was a partial revival of religion in the north-east part of the town, and a small number of persons were at that time hopefully brought into the kingdom of Christ. In 1808, God, in his infinite mercy, was pleased to pour out his spirit upon the Church and people, and to awaken, convince, and renew the hearts of many, who had before lived in impenitency and unbelief. The number of persons received into the Church, soon after that revival, was fifty-six. In 1815, the means of grace were accompanied with saving efficacy, and one hundred and sixty-one persons were added to the Church. In 1820, a revival of religion commenced in the Sabbath School, which was for a little season, powerful; and sixteen hopeful converts were the fruits of it. In the year 1821, there was a general revival of religion in the town, and seventy-six persons were added to the Church. In 1826 and '7, this Church and people were again blessed with a shower of divine grace, and the number soon after received into the Church was one hundred and twenty-three. In 1830, a more than common attention to the subject of religion prevailed, and the number received into the Church at one time in that year was nineteen. In 1836, forty were added to the Church, as the fruits of a revival of religion that year; and in 1843, the means of grace were again attended with divine power, and the anxious inquiry was heard, 'What shall we do to be saved?' A goodly number were hopefully brought into a saving union to Christ, and sixty-seven persons were admitted to the fellowship and communion of the Church. Thus God, in his mercy and grace, has favored this Church with ten different seasons of the special manifestations of his divine influence accompanying the means of grace which they have enjoyed.

The character of these several revivals of religion was essentially the same. It may, notwithstanding, be useful to describe the appearance of the work in the first instance; because in that there seemed to be less that was exceptionable than in almost any that afterwards occurred. In that revival the immediate hand of Omnipotence was most strikingly exhibited. It was preceded by no providential occurrences that were uncommon. No special judgments were felt at the time. No mere device

or invention of man was attempted, in order '*to get up a revival*,' as is sometimes expressed. Only a little time before, people of every description appeared to be slumbering and sleeping as to the subject of religion. Religious instruction was just the same as it *had been*; and, so far from being affected by mere sympathy, it was often the case, persons who lived in the same neighborhood and in the same family, were greatly distressed in mind, without knowing the feelings of each other; and, as soon as any were really awakened to the concerns of the soul, they seemed at once to be engaged in acquiring religious knowledge. The sacred Scriptures were diligently searched, as well as other religious books, especially those that had for their object the illustration of the doctrines of grace. The Bible, as well as books of the description I have mentioned, were read with avidity. Some of those who had always before been regardless of religious truth, and most shamefully ignorant of the doctrines of the gospel, were able, in a little time, to speak of the depravity of the human heart, the nature of sin, the beauties of holiness, and the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ; and, indeed, of all the doctrines, duties, and institutions of the Christian system, with a propriety that was truly astonishing.

That revival began in the Church; and I believe that, upon inquiry, it will be found to be true, that, in almost every instance of religious revival, its first appearance is in the Church of Christ. When God is about to bestow spiritual blessings upon a people, it is his usual method first to awaken his professed friends out of sleep. Before a single instance of conviction of sin was known in this town, in the spring of 1799, a good proportion of the members of the Church, in the course of a few days, manifested deep concern for the cause of Christ amongst us. A spirit of fervent prayer seemed to be given them; and as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth children. When, therefore, the professed followers of Christ grieve the Holy Spirit,—when they have evidently much leanness of soul,—when they are cold in the discharge of incumbent duty,—they can have but little reason to suppose that a shower of divine grace is near them.

A genuine revival of religion most strikingly evinces the importance of all the means of grace which God hath instituted. When once the attention of a people is really called up to the concerns of the soul, how precious in their view, are seasons of prayer! How precious is God's holy Sabbath Day! How anxious are they who are awakened to search the Scriptures! How highly do they prize every opportunity to acquire religious knowledge! How great would be the distress of such, if they were at once deprived of all opportunity to learn the character of God, to acquire right views of their own moral state, and of the gospel plan of salvation! God works by means in the *moral* as well as in the *natural* world. They are not the end, but are necessary to the end. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' They, therefore, who would grow in grace, and make progress in the divine life, must make the Bible the man of their counsel, and diligently and prayerfully attend on the means which are instituted for that end.

I here remark, once more, that in reference to the revival of religion in this town in 1799, amongst those who were awakened to attend to religious truth, a remarkable uniformity was apparent in regard to the doctrines which were embraced. Those were such as are usually termed Calvinistic. Such truths as the total and awful depravity of the human heart — the necessity of regeneration, or a change of moral taste, as a preparation for the enjoyment of the communion blessedness of heaven — the equity of the divine law, in its penalty as well as precept — God's sovereignty and electing love in the salvation of sinners, as constituting the only possible ground of hope in the case of a guilty offender — the necessity of gospel morality as an evidence of justifying faith; and all the doctrines of the Bible, essentially connected with these, were readily received by all 'with one consent.'

The whole number of persons received into this Church since my ordination, is eight hundred and fifteen. One hundred and eight of those were received by letters of recommendation from other Churches. No male member of the Church, at the time I became their Pastor, is now living. The last survivor was Mr. Uriah

Judd, who died October, 1839, in the 94th year of his age. Two females are yet living, who were members of the Church when I became connected with it, viz: Mrs. Way, aged 96, and the widow of the late Mr. Abner Bangs, aged 79.

The present number of members of this Church is two hundred and ninety-one. Some of these have gone to reside in different and distant places, without having their particular relation to this Church transferred to any other; and, in some instances, without my knowledge of their present location. Such a course is very improper for professors of religion, and often proves to be injurious to the cause of the Redeemer. In the course of my ministry, I have baptised nine hundred and sixty-nine persons. Six hundred and seventy-nine of those were in infancy. The stated time for the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as adopted by this Church when it was organized, is the first Sabbath in each quarter of the year, and has never been omitted but *twice* since my ordination; and that was owing to the sickness of the Pastor. My record of deaths within the limits of the town was begun in the year 1803. In that year the number of deaths was sixteen. Allowing the number through the seven previous years to have been, upon an average, *ten* in a year, which is probably a low estimate, and the whole number of deaths, in the town, during my ministry, would be nine hundred and fifty-three. The number brought from other places, and buried here in the different grave yards, is 48. Of these, some of all ages, and in all conditions of life, have fallen beneath the stroke of death. Parents, just engaged in the busy scenes of life, have been taken suddenly away from their rising families; and children have also been arrested by the king of terrors, on whom fond parents had placed sanguine expectations, and that under their fostering care and protection they would be prepared to act an honorable and useful part on the stage of life. But, however unexpected or unprepared, they are gone. Death will invade us by the means appointed, and bounds are set to man's life, beyond which he cannot pass. We all must go to the dead. They will not return to us.

‘ They ’re fix’d in an eternal state,
 They ’ve done with all below ;
 We, a little longer, wait,
 But *how little*, none can know.’

Surely it might be seasonable for us, who yet live, to pause and inquire — what would now have been our state if we had been taken away by death, instead of those whom we have followed to the grave? Their call to us, is, ‘ Be ye, also, ready.’ And if we rightly improve their death, it may be a greater blessing to us, than if they had been spared longer on *earth*.

‘ Smitten friends,’ says the poet, ‘ are angels, sent on errands full of love ; for us they languish, and for us they die.’ Oh! let them not languish — let them not die in vain! This is their call to us from the grave. This is the voice of God to us, in His providence. This is His voice in His word. ‘ Our fathers—where are they? And the prophets—do they live forever? We are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are a shadow, and, there is none abiding.’

I do not now know of but three men and their wives, living in a family state, who were inhabitants of the town, and married before my ordination ; these are Mr. Titus Parker, Mr. Allen Metcalf and Mr. Barnard Hinsdale, and their wives. Only one man is, to my knowledge, now living, who took an active part in procuring my settlement in this place, as a Minister of the Gospel ; and that is Mr. Joshua Carpenter, now residing in Lee. And, as a striking commentary upon the declaration — ‘ One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh,’ — I may state, that among those who assembled at my house on the first day of January, this year, to present their kind salutations and their tokens of friendship and respect, there were the great grandchildren of some who were active members of the Congregational Church and Society at the commencement of my ministry. Since the time of my ordination, the number of marriages solemnized by me is two hundred and seventy-three. During that time, I have attended, by invitation, eighty-five ecclesiastical councils, and have taken an active part in the business of each. No such council, however, has been called by this

Church, since my connection with it, to aid in settling difficulties which have resulted from cases of discipline which, at different times, have occurred in the Church. But, not to dwell now upon the number of sermons I have preached, (which I suppose would average four in a week during my ministry,) or the number of ordinations and ecclesiastical councils I have attended—to say nothing of the sick visited, and funerals attended—parochial visits made and received—passing company entertained—meetings of association attended—occasional lectures preached—meetings for prayer attended—visiting primary schools and higher institutions of learning—omitting, also, to speak of domestic concerns and other avocations frequently and necessarily occurring, I would draw your attention at once, to the facts of a local nature which I have presented for your consideration at this time, and inquire if they do not, in your minds, most strikingly illustrate the truth of the declaration—‘The fashion of this world passeth away?’ Ah! how few and fleeting are the days of man upon the earth! What changes does a little time make in the circumstances of individuals—of families—of neighborhoods—of different societies—of towns—of states and nations—in the Church of Christ—and in the natural and moral state of the world!

[Here there was a pause in the delivery of the sermon, while a Hymn, the first line of which is—

‘Hark! the song of Jubilee’—was sung by the choir.]

Just fifty years ago this day, and at this very hour of the day, a scene was witnessed, *upon this hill*, of deep moral interest. A youth, just entering upon the stage of life, buoyant with health and hope, and constrained, as he believed, by love to Christ and to souls, was solemnly consecrated to the work of the gospel ministry, and took upon himself those solemn ordination vows, for the performance of which he must, eventually, answer at the judgment bar. But who, I ask, ever looked forward to fifty years, without viewing it as an almost interminable period? Again I ask, who ever looked back to it, even through the mists that envelope its changes and vicissitudes without exclaiming—‘Surely, life is as a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and

then vanisheth away!’ Who would recognize, in the time-worn pilgrim who now stands before you, with the weight of years heavy on his brow, his sun so near its setting, and his shadow fast lengthening, the same man — the same being — who, fifty years ago, was, by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, stationed upon these heights of Zion, as overseer of a flock then few and feeble? A portion of them however, were men, strong in heart, and noble in purpose; — men who did not shrink at great sacrifices, that they might secure to themselves and their children, those great moral and religious influences which they knew to be absolutely essential to the temporal and spiritual interests of any people. Amidst divisions and bitter animosities they struggled on manfully. The Lord blessed their efforts, and they gradually attained to the calm sunshine of peace and prosperity. How vividly the vision now rises before me of that old church, with its narrow windows, and venerable sounding board, and the very places where sat many fathers and mothers in Israel! There they fed upon the bread of life, and so manifested the abiding power of the precious truths of divine revelation in their daily life and example, as to become goodly pillars and polished stones in the Church of God. They were the parents, grand parents, and great grand parents of some who are now before God, in His house of worship, on this occasion. The same glorious rampart of hills still stretches around us, (for in beauty hath the God of Jacob made them,) — the same sky is over our heads — but where now are those fathers and mothers in *Israel*! Ah! most of them, and the succeeding generation too, have found a quiet resting place in yonder narrow silent halls. There

‘ Friends, kindred and neighbors are laid side by side;
But none have saluted, and none have replied.’

Oh! what a flood of touching, tender remembrances rushes upon the mind, at such a review! ‘ The past revives — the *distant* now is nigh — and shadowy forms come forth in memory’s light.’ How many interesting family groups now rise before me, with as much freshness as if it were but yesterday that I sat among them — listened to their plans — entered into their joys and sorrows —

and followed them through all their vicissitudes and changes, till death closed the scene, and they *all*, one after another, were laid side by side, in *that*, our common home. How many a youthful pair, who, full of hope, looked forward to life as one long summer's day, have I united in matrimony, that holy tie which bound them to each other for weal or woe. Upon their infant offspring, as they rose in succession around them, I have placed the baptismal seal, and borne witness to their consecration vows to train them up for God, and invoked his blessing, which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow thereto. I have also seen those who were thus dedicated to God, rise in their turn to man's and woman's estate; and, amid a cheerful gathering of bright faces and joyous hearts, have united them in those holy bands which constituted them heads of families. They, too, became parents, and at this altar, upon the third generation have I placed the seal of the covenant. From almost all the houses in the town I have gone with the funeral train to the adjacent graveyard to perform the last melancholy office towards the remains of deceased fellow mortals. Oh! How many a friend do I recall, by whose bed-side I have been, as the shadows of death were gathering thick around him; and with stricken friends have sought support and consolation for the departing spirit! It was perhaps, a grey-haired sire, full of years and honors,—one who had long lived with an eye fixed on heaven as his home, and had nothing now left to do but to bestow his blessing on his children and the Church of God, and then be gathered to his fathers. The angel of the covenant had come, and, faithful to his promise, stood prepared to walk with him through death's dark vale. And, blessed be God, we have in many instances witnessed that most *sublime scene*—the Christian bidding adieu to the world and time, in humble hope of a glorious immortality—a scene *sublime indeed*, when the departing soul, which seemed to look within the veil, appeared to be so sustained by the power of faith and the joy of hope, as it drew near the shore of eternity, as to render it a triumphant, yea, almost a joyful scene. Amid the crowd of rushing reminiscences, those scenes come thickening upon me. Often have I seen the father bending beneath the weight of care and responsibility—the father,

whose heart swelled with anxiety and hope, as he cast an eye upon the little helpless group whose sole dependence for protection and support, was, under providence, upon *him*, stricken down, as in a moment, and have gone with the agonized widow, and grief-stricken little ones, to bury their all of earthly comfort out of their sight. On many a fair youth I have cast my eyes with pleasure, and with almost paternal pride; and, as I watched their ripening virtues, have said to my own heart — ‘*He* will in time become a pillar, or, *she* will be a polished stone in our Zion.’ But the destroyer came, and the places that once knew them shall know them no more forever. Amid the deep mystery and darkness which envelope such dispensations, we could only say — ‘Father, Thy will be done.’ Ah! my hearers, *none can know* what this life-long interest in a people is, but he who has felt it. It is lodged deeply in his inmost soul. It becomes identified with the deepest feelings of his heart, and I had almost said with his very being; so much so, that he comes to regard them very much as the children who were reared around his own hearth-stone. If there is now and then a wanderer, like the prodigal son, from some household, he enters into the trials and distresses of the family as if their disgrace or prosperity were a part of his own; for surely the erring one belonged to his own flock. Often, in the silent hours of night, does he send up to heaven the fervent supplication that the wayward child may yet be restored to virtue and to happiness. I, too, in this long course of years, have known afflictions deep and bitter, and have received from you the tenderest sympathy. Yes, disease has at times laid his blighting hand upon me. Death has also invaded the sanctuary of my heart and home. Many a time have we gone together in solemn procession to yonder places of the dead — I with you, and you with me; for the companion of my youth, who bore with me the heat and burden of the day, has gone the way of all the earth. The fair young scion, too, who sprang up by my side as a sun-beam in my path-way, was with the summer flowers cut off, to be here no more. Both have been laid in the dark and narrow house, and the tear of grief has fallen upon it, when no eye saw but His who is omniscient. Most of us, indeed, have felt,

in yonder small inclosure, 'how much the heart *can bear*.' Yes, some of us know, by experience, 'the nerve whence agony is born.'

In view of the ravages of disease and death, which we have witnessed in the course of our pilgrimage on earth, is not the inquiry unspeakably important, 'What is the report which *our years*, gone with the years beyond the flood, have carried to heaven; and, what is the report which they ought to have carried there?' *Our* lives have been preserved, while multitudes with whom we have been conversant have fallen in death. We have enjoyed numerous temporal favors at the hand of God. Have we received them with thanksgiving, and improved them to the divine glory? We have been favored with the word of God—have heard the voice of His providence in scenes of mortality which have occurred in the midst of us. Have we wisely improved them? Or, have we yet the great work to do, not only of dying, but of preparing to die? If so, it is still more difficult and arduous to do, and far less likely than ever before, that we shall in future be disposed to set ourselves in earnest about it.

Surely this truth carries solemn admonition to the *aged*.

Need they be reminded that the sands in *their* glass of life are almost out—and that there is but a step betwixt them and death? Since they began their earthly course they have witnessed great changes in all the departments of human life. They find themselves in the midst of a new generation. They have seen new Ministers at the altar—new Judges on the bench—and new Magistrates in the chair of state. They have seen the wilderness turned into a fruitful field—and waste places made fertile and teem with plenty. They have seen the facilities of travelling and transaction of business wonderfully multiplied by turnpikes and canals, by steamboats and railroads. They have seen cities rise where only a little time since was an unbroken forest. Since their remembrance the world has been convulsed by wars and revolutions—thrones have been overturned—and the moral and religious aspect of the world greatly changed. They surely cannot mistake the import of the text. But do they bring it home, and apply it in their own case? Do

they duly consider that their years pass away as swiftly as the years of others, and that they may have at farthest but two or three left? Do they consider that as far as the days of the years of their pilgrimage are gone, so far they in a sense are dead? Let all such, therefore, be exhorted to set their houses in order, that they may die; yea, to stand with their lamps trimmed and burning, waiting, in penitence and prayer, in faith and new obedience, in patience and submission to the will of God, all the days of their appointed time upon earth, till their change come. On the middle-aged the burden of civil and religious society now rests. Let them feel the responsibility of their stations. Let them strive uniformly to maintain and hand down to posterity, those institutions, in their purity, which their fathers sought, by so great a sacrifice of blood and treasure, to secure to themselves and their children. Amidst the busy scenes and corroding cares of life, let none of them forget that *one thing* is needful, and that the present moment is the only one in which they can say — ‘It is not too late to repent and return to God.’ Another moment may prove their delay to be death. Of what infinite value, therefore, is a moment of time to a sinner unreconciled to God! On the present moment his eternity of joy or sorrow may be suspended. Let the middle-aged, therefore, while they diligently use the means which God approves, to procure temporal blessings, make it their chief concern to obtain spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ; and so to live as that the world may be benefited by their having had an existence in it. Yea, let them strive so to discharge all incumbent duty towards God, and themselves and others, as to leave a savour of Christ’s name behind when they quit the stage.

And may the rising generation remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Forget not, my young friends, that ‘the fashion of this world passeth away.’ Of this you are reminded, ‘by the decline and setting of the sun — by the gliding of the moon along in her midnight course — by the motion of the shadow upon the dial, and by the striking of a clock, hour after hour.’ These all admonish you of the silent flight of time. They, however, who are at your period of life, are prone to feel

themselves privileged from death. You naturally promise yourselves many days to come of worldly enjoyment, and consider serious reflections upon the subject of mortality to be ill-suited to the bloom and gayety of your years. Trust not, however, to your youth and vigor. A very fair morning is oftentimes suddenly overcast with clouds. Of this you are convinced from your own experience and observation. You have seen some of your equals in age, and many younger than yourselves, borne to the grave. When you see such in the agonies of death, or the corpse of one called away in early life, and borne to the grave, you are solemnly admonished that your months and moments are all determined of God, that the season of your probation will soon be ended, and that you cannot boast of to-morrow. Would you, therefore, be prepared for death; or, rather, would you be prepared to *live* with any truly comfortable prospects — ‘Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.’

We sometimes hear it said — ‘We know not where our graves will be.’ This, in a general sense, is true. In view of my period of life, however, and its attendant circumstances, I shall probably die here, and be buried in the midst of those to a great proportion of whom I have ministered in holy things. You will, doubtless, many of you, behold the coffin in which I shall be laid. You will mark the mortal paleness on this breathless clay. You will see these eyes closed in death, and this tongue cease to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to perishing sinners. In mournful procession you will probably follow the sable hearse on which I shall be borne to the house appointed for all living. You will sometimes stand by my grave and talk of me, and of years never to return. It may be, as you cast an eye on the grave in which I am laid, a tender recollection of scenes unspeakably interesting to us, as dying and accountable creatures, will constrain you to drop a tear upon the cold clod under which this worthless body will lie buried. Some of you may, perhaps, stand at times by my grave, to read a silent lecture on mortality, furnished by the plain monument erected there. On that will be inscribed the year, the month, and the day of my departure, for the information of strangers even. O! that the solemn and

awful day that shall finish my appointed time upon earth, and put a final period to all my labors and designs, may be continually and usefully on my mind while I live; and may you all have grace so to number your days, as to apply your hearts unto wisdom. Forget not that sooner or later you must all die and pass into eternity; and whilst friends, or strangers, or enemies are engaged in yonder places of the dead, in reading the date of your departure out of this world, you will be fixed under a decisive and unchangeable sentence—rejoicing in the rewards of time well redeemed and improved, or suffering the unspeakable sorrows which must inevitably attend the abuse of it.

To the people of my pastoral charge permit me to say: I have been young, and now am old. Your fathers did not despise my youth on account of its weaknesses and imperfections, nor have you, apparently, my old age, under the infirmities attending it. I hope ever to retain a grateful sense of the kindness and respect which you have manifested towards me, and which have been continued from fathers to children and children's children to this day. It may be that God will suffer me to labor a little longer with you in the work of the ministry. If so, it must be in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. On one thing, however, you may rely. I shall bring no *new* or 'strange things' to your ears. I have, already, in this discourse, given you a summary of the doctrines taught and received in the early part of my ministry. They are such as were inculcated and defended by Edwards, Brainard, Hopkins, Belamy and others, and are *essential* to that 'gospel of the grace of God' which Paul testified. They are the glorious truths which God blesses in the formation of Christian character and Christian graces. And here I desire to record my unshaken belief, as the testimony of fifty years' experience in the gospel ministry, that they are the only doctrines which afford any ground of hope for saints or sinners. Should I outlive my usefulness among you, I am, notwithstanding, encouraged, from past experience, to rely much on your patience and forbearance; on your sympathy also, and compassion, when even all the reward you can hope for, will consist in the satisfaction of having

aided an old man down the steep of age and through the last stages of his weary pilgrimage. The sun to me is fast sinking beneath the western horizon, and as it disappears, and eternity presses on my sight, may I be enabled, through divine grace, in the language of the poet, to say :

‘ Soon shall I pass the gloomy vale ;
 Soon all my mortal powers must fail ;
 Oh ! may my last expiring breath,
 His loving kindness sing in death ! ’

‘ Generation after generation,’ says one, ‘ have felt as we now feel, and their fellows were as active in life as ours now. They passed away as a vapor, while nature wore the same aspect of beauty as when her Creator commanded her *to be*. And so likewise shall it be when we are gone. The heavens shall be as bright over our *graves*, as they are now around *our path*. The world will have the same attraction for offspring yet unborn, that she had once for ourselves, and that she has now for our children. Yet a little while, and all this will have occurred. The throbbing heart will be stilled, and we shall be at rest. Our funeral will wind its way ; its sacred rites will be performed ; the grave clods will be thrown in ; our friends will then return, and we shall be left behind to darkness and to worms. It may be, indeed, that for some short time we shall be spoken of ; but the things of life will soon creep in, and our names will soon be forgotten. Days will continue and move on ; and laughter and song will be heard, perhaps, in the very chamber in which we died. The eye, also, that mourned for us, will be dried and glisten again with joy. Even our children may cease to think of us, and forget to lisp our names. Then, truly, in the touching language of the Psalmist, shall ‘ we become forgotten and clean out of mind.’

Thus far, my hearers, we have been led to contemplate things pertaining to this world, and the fashion of the world as passing away. And truly many great events have passed in review, and many more will be witnessed by the rising generation. But there is *one event* to the righteous and the wicked. Though we carry about with us the seeds of death, and must soon fall

before the great leveller of all distinctions, yet we live for eternity, and its retributions await us all. Soon must we pass the vale of death, and enter upon another state of existence. Yes, soon shall we all, Minister and people, appear in the presence of Him who is ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead. Look we along the line of our existence, through the vista of coming centuries, and another scene — one of deep, solemn and overwhelming interest, will occur upon this very hill; for we are assured by Him ‘who spake as never man spake,’ that ‘the hour cometh in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.’ Yes, the day cometh when the trump of God shall sound through Heaven, and earth and sea — break up old marble — and reanimate the multiplied millions, who, in this world of sin and sorrow, have fallen in death. Minister and people must then rise, and together stand before the Son of Man, to answer how we have taught, and how we have heard. Then will the long history of Sabbaths — the privileges of social prayer — opportunities to commemorate the dying love of Jesus — lost opportunities of doing good — yea, all the motives by which we have been actuated — be spread out before us as with a sunbeam. In that day of awful disclosure, may we find Jesus our friend, and may he hide us beneath the shadow of his wings, and be to us as a covert from the storm of wrath divine. How indescribably momentous the scene, when we shall see Him on the throne, shall hear His voice, and know that His sentence can never be reversed! Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. Yet a little while, and the commissioned angel shall lift his hand to Heaven, and swear by Him that liveth forever and ever, that there shall be time no longer. Yet a little while, and the last trumpet shall sound. Then shall yonder sun sink in eternal night — the moon be turned into blood — all the stars of light shall fade — the beauties of creation be blotted out — these heavens be rolled together as a scroll, and this earth, ‘lighted up by ten thousand fires, shall be dissolved.’ Therefore, let

the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn unto the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. Behold now is the accepted time. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. Let us feel the importance of standing in constant readiness for the coming of our Lord. *Delay* may be *death*. Can our time be of so *little value*, that we may any longer throw it away in the eager pursuit of the things that perish in the using? Throw it away! Throw *time away*!

‘Throw empires, and be blameless. Moments seize.
Heaven’s on the wing: a moment we may wish,
When worlds want wealth to buy.’

A D D R E S S .

[After the Sermon, the Rev. Mr. TODD, of Pittsfield, arose, and made a few extemporary remarks, in substance as follows.]

I SHOULD do injustice to my own feelings, and no less to the feelings of the nine or ten Ministers of Christ who are present, and who have gathered around the venerable man who has just sat down, and listened to the words which have fallen from his lips, with emotions which do honor to their nature—did I not express my sincere thanks for this privilege of mingling our congratulations and our tears with this flock, on this novel and interesting occasion. We shall number it among the choicest seasons which occur during our pilgrimage. A rare thing it is for a Pastor to minister to a flock in faithfulness for half a century, and for a Church to sit so long under his ministrations, with a profiting that is apparent to all, and with a reverence that is ever increasing. By the statistics of the ordinations in this County, which have been given in the Sermon, you have heard how Ministers and people have been given to change. If the pastoral office does not pass away with the fashion of this world, it is pretty certain that Pastors do. The evil of exchanging Pastors is a very great one, and the fault is partly the fault of the Pastor, and partly that of the people. We have feared lest it has come about that the young Minister feels that it is of little consequence whether he first settle in one place or another, since he must serve a kind of ministerial apprenticeship somewhere, and then remove to the right sphere; and that the people begin to feel that if their Minister does not

receive a call to go away within five years, that it is of itself evidence enough that he is not great enough for them! At any rate, it is refreshing to see a Pastor putting on the golden crown of fifty years since his ordination.

We are struck, on such an occasion as this, at the wisdom of God, in giving Pastors to the Churches of Christ. Your Minister has told you briefly what some of his labors have been,—how that he has preached more than ten thousand sermons to you—how that he has attended so many hundreds of funerals—but he has not told you, and he could not do it, how many sick beds he has visited, how many widows and orphans he has met and sympathized with—how many schools he has visited, how many days he has given to higher seminaries—how many meetings for the awakened sinner he has attended, nor how many hours he has lain on his pillow thinking over the responsibilities of his situation, and what he could next do for the spiritual good of his flock! You have recalled the past, and seen your Minister in public; but what passes within his study and his own heart—the sorrow and the trials, the hopes and the fears, the joys and the sorrows, which come and go in the course of fifty years—these he could not show you, and he did not attempt it. Oh! could you see all this, you would understand that it is not age alone that has bowed the strong man, nor years alone that have weighed him down. We admire and praise that grace which has upheld and carried him along, amid the spiritual frosts and fevers of fifty years; we sympathize most deeply with the emotions of one who was ordained, probably, before any of these Ministers present were born; and we congratulate this Church on the honor which all her sister Churches will cheerfully bestow, because she has heeded the counsels, and stood by her Pastor, so long and so faithfully. We gather new confidence for the Church of God for the future. It shows that there are nails yet in his temple, fastened in a sure place, and which the Redeemer will not allow any one to draw out. It makes us feel sure that He who has thus fed and sheltered this flock so long, will still be mindful of it, and will not suffer the seed sown here so long and so faithfully, beside all waters, to

decay, and come to nought. It may lie buried in the dust for a time, but 'in the end the vision shall speak, and not lie.'

Some seem unable to comprehend the strength of the attachment which subsists between a faithful Minister of the Gospel and the people of his charge. They seem to forget that this relation is, of all others, the most spiritual, and the one that is designed to extend into the ages of eternity. Here is little room for the selfish feelings to have play, while all the purer and holier feelings of the heart are brought into continual exercise. When the family in distress and sorrow has its griefs shared by their Pastor, — when the widow and the orphan sees his tears mingled with theirs, — when the mother lies on her pillow praying for her wandering, distant son, and knows that her Minister is perhaps at that moment praying also for him, — these all know and feel that here is no place for selfishness. It is the work of the heart.

The associations also, which blend in the memory of the labors of an aged Minister of Christ, are peculiar, also, from the fact that they are connected with our loftiest and best emotions. For half a century he has been letting the light of God's character into the mind of his flock. He has been gathering the rays of divine light, and concentrating them, and pouring them in upon his people. Whenever they have come in contact with him, they have felt that they were coming in contact with their most enlarged conceptions of truth, their noblest aspirations after what is good, and the most earnest and far-reaching desires of the soul. He takes off the eye from beholding vanity, — he raises their thoughts above the little sorrows and vexations of life, — he helps them to look over their mutual frailties and faults, and cheers them with the hope that they will one day meet in a state of unalloyed blessedness. By the light of God's great truths, he aids them to subdue themselves, he enlarges their vision, he expands their intellect, and shows them the divine character as in a glass, till they are changed from glory to glory. No wonder, when such a man is taken away, the people 'weep most of all that they shall see his face no more.'

Most sincerely, Reverend Sir, do these younger Ministers of

the Gospel sit down at your feet, to-day, with reverence and love. We rejoice in that grace which has enabled you to be so faithful, and in that Providence which has spared you so long to labor in this beautiful vineyard. We rejoice in that mighty testimony which you bear to-day, that, at the close of a ministry of fifty years, you are more and more confirmed in those great and glorious doctrines of the Cross, which were the cherished belief of our Puritan fathers, and which have brought our New England Churches up into the spring-tide of the latter day glory. We rejoice in those outpourings of God's spirit, on an average once in five years, which have kept this garden so fresh, its plants so vigorous, and its flowers so beautiful. Sir, though you may soon be called to leave a spot so endeared, you will not go feeling that the fire on this altar, which you have so long nurtured, is to go out, or its flame grow dim. The children shall be instead of the fathers, it is true; but your hand shall be felt here long after it is cold in the grave, and your labors here shall perpetuate themselves in the long years of the future. This flock will have to let another generation pass away, ere your voice ceases to sound here, or the memory of your form ceases to rise up before the mirror of that memory. Your most beautiful monument shall be reared in their hearts. And, should your brethren in the ministry outlive you, and be called to follow you to yonder grave-yard, there is not one of us who will shed tears of gratitude and sorrow who will not have his faith strengthened by your example, and pray that the mantle of our father may fall on us!

Oh! who of us will ever witness another scene like this! When another fifty years shall return, that sun will be shining as at this hour; and these hills will stand around as they now do, and throw their shadows upon these beautiful valleys, and others will fill these seats,—but we—where shall we be? All, all will have passed away! Oh! that we may so live that we may meet above in that pure world where age shall not bring infirmities, where sin shall not reign, and where, amid joyful gatherings, tears shall not fall because separations are so soon to follow.

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